

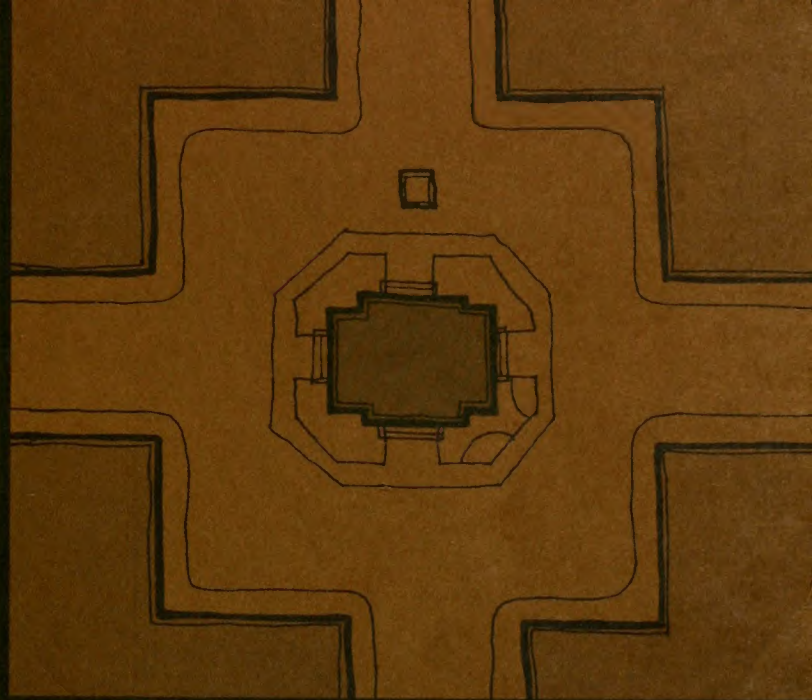


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GRAHAM

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GRAHAM

N O R T H C A R O L I N A

CENTRAL
BUSINESS
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STUDY
1967

PREPARED FOR:

THE CITY OF GRAHAM

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SECTION

1



INTRODUCTION

This study will examine the problems and potentials of Downtown Graham. It will also present a Preliminary Development Plan for the Central Business District that will try to eliminate the existing problems and help Graham fully realize its future potential.

The heart, or downtown area of the city is usually its oldest part, for it is here that the early city grew and developed as a social, economic and political force. The downtown area was laid out according to the convenient means of travel of the day, which happened to be horse drawn vehicles, motor cars (in small numbers) and pedestrians. This necessitated close grouping of stores and shops.

With this physical need for close arrangement, business areas developed into compact units for commercial trading. Immediately around the retail core churches, schools, governmental offices and manufacturing facilities sprang up to form an even larger concentration of activities within the center of the city. Close around this core of activity was the residential area with the most expensive and influential houses being located as close to the center as possible. This neat unit formed a well balanced community that had a place for every use.

Growing Pains

As in most situations, the pains of growth caused discordant pressures from many directions which have distorted the structured community and caused it to lose much of its original identity. By this failure to look far enough into the future, man has allowed his surroundings to change without effective controls and this could ultimately result in the orderly system breaking down into a large monotonous sprawl.

Two major factors are the basis for this almost uniform problem of every city in the country: increased population and the advent and utilization of the automobile. The evidence of the convenience of transportation is all about. Major roads leading to the center of the city are choked with businesses on either side, community shopping centers appear at every intersection, offices and governmental agencies run to the suburbs for large tracts of land and the farther a person can live from his work and the center of town the better. With this sort of mass exodus, it is not surprising that the downtown areas of the country are suffering from lack of use.

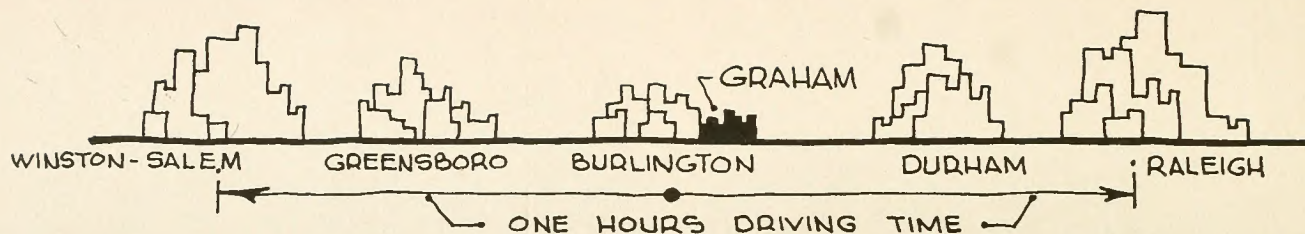
Downtown Survival

If the downtown is going to survive it must compete favorably with the shopping facilities that are developing in the fringe areas and with the large cities in the regional trading areas. It should either equal the quality and variety of merchandise, well decorated shops, abundant off-street parking, convenient traffic circulation and pleasant surroundings found within these shopping areas or offer some other amenities that are not to be found elsewhere. It must excel in some aspect in order to maintain its position as a competitor.

Graham is suffering most of the aforementioned ills and competing with Burlington and the nearby shopping areas will be difficult, but it must be done if the City is to grow and not remain in the shadow of its neighbors.

Graham must redefine its purposes for existing and fix firmly its means of achieving its desired goals. Downtown Graham should be encouraged to grow with some orderly development of the entire downtown area and not just at the will of the individual. Results of this sort of hit or miss development are all too apparent today. It is far too wasteful for the dense growth projections of the future. Graham must look at the over-all development if its central business district is to attain its full capabilities.



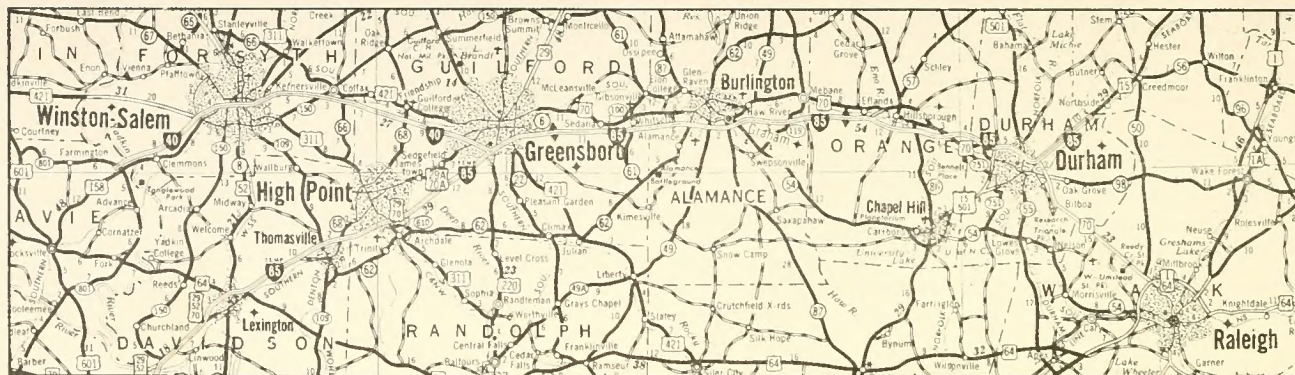


REGIONAL SETTING

The location of Graham presents several unique and difficult problems. Its proximity to Burlington is complicated by the location of another shopping center, Cum-Park Plaza near downtown Burlington and downtown Graham. Further complicating matters is the location of Graham on Interstate 85 which puts most shoppers in the Graham-Burlington area within one hour's driving time of Greensboro, Durham, High Point and Raleigh. These larger cities are extremely difficult to compete with on a shop-for-shop basis, and, as more and more people are concentrated in these larger urban areas, competition on an even basis will be even more difficult.

The Burlington-Graham area is gaining in population, yet this gain is not reflected in the growth of Graham's downtown area. So it is safe to assume that Graham's shopping facilities are not satisfying the needs of the customers and they are going elsewhere.

Graham's location can be a defeating disadvantage or it can be a definite advantage and its greatest asset. It remains only for the people of Graham to decide whether they are going to allow the larger commercial areas around them to drain away the existing or new available income or whether Graham is going to assert itself as a distinct shopping area offering competitive merchandise, ample parking, convenient circulation for pedestrians and vehicles and a pleasant atmosphere for shopping. The roads that take potential customers away from Graham can be made to work in both directions. Its accessibility and present lack of congestion may prove to be the factors that will enable Graham to develop its commercial potential and achieve the status of an urban shopping area.

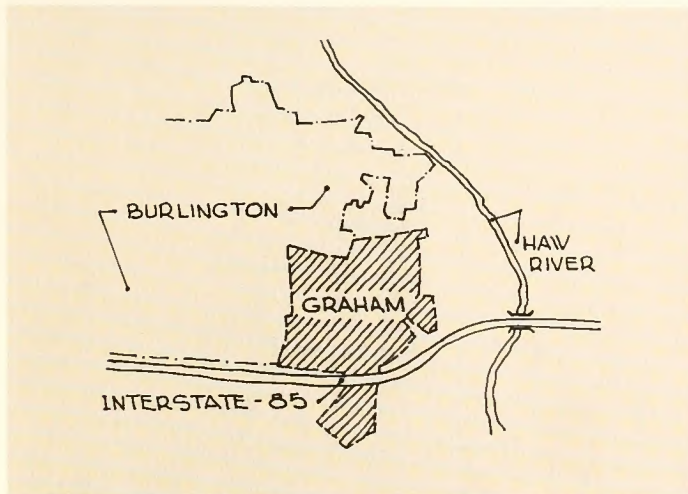


SITE CHARACTERISTICS

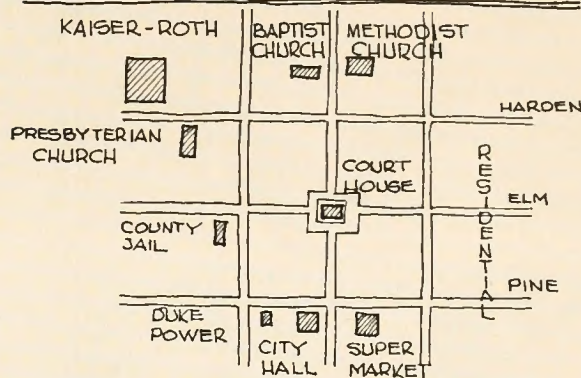
The physical location of Graham presents few problems which would adversely affect the development of the City in general or the downtown area specifically. The land is gently rolling and has no outstanding natural features which impose undue limitations on the City's growth. The one limitation which should be considered is Haw River. The river presents a physical barrier for utilities, traffic and easy development and location of retail stores and in turn affects the growth of the Central Business District. Since the natural features are not the limiting factors which have directly affected the growth patterns of the Central Business District, it must be assumed that something else has been the dominating influence.

Man-Made Barriers

The City itself is contained by the man-made barriers that surround its limits, the City of Burlington being the most imposing. Burlington has extended to Graham's city limits to the west and is now in the process of spreading to the north and around in an easterly direction toward Haw River. In fact, the limits already reach the river's edge at one point. To the south Interstate 85 provides another man-made barrier by running along the entire south side of the City. This highway could virtually have been a retaining wall for development. Fortunately Graham was provided with two interchanges at the end of Harden and Main Streets. These interchanges will allow convenient access between downtown and the lands to the south of the highway for future development. Without these interchanges the City's growth would be limited in every direction.

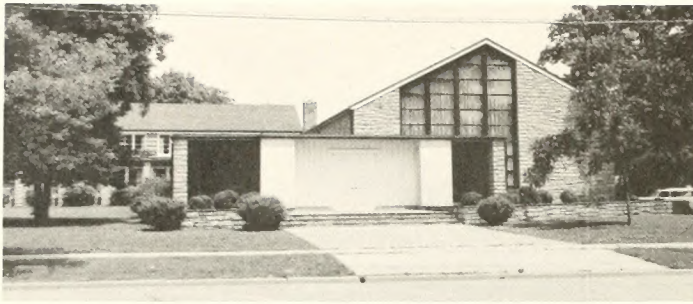


BUFFERS FOR THE DOWNTOWN



Looking more specifically at the central business district, the barriers to growth and logical development are again man-made. The core area has been contained to a great extent by the site of the court house and the original grouping of commercial buildings around the square. The next largest limiting factor has been the established residential neighborhoods around the business core. Several churches, First Methodist, First Baptist and Graham Presbyterian have further established the boundary by locating between the commercial and residential area. In addition to these, the location of the Kayser-Roth Plant has served to halt commercial development along Harden Street.



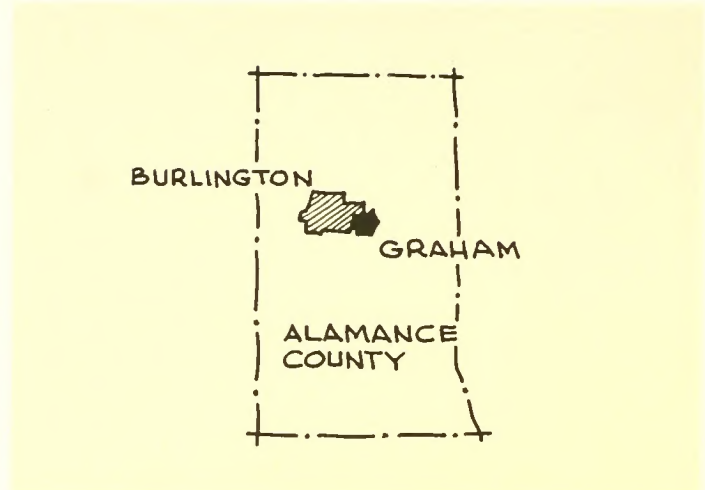


These physical barriers should be recognized as a good limiting factor for the present trend of unrelated expansion which depends on the automobile to go from shop to shop. The convenience of compactness cannot be over-emphasized and will eventually be a major consideration in the success or failure of the downtown area.

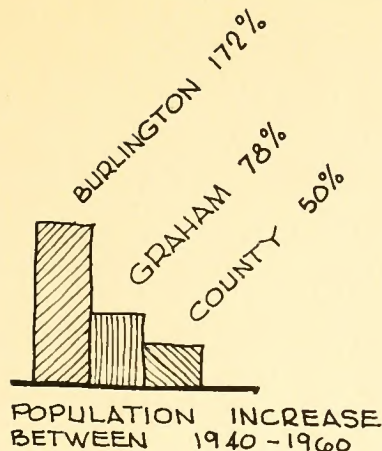
ECONOMY

Most towns the size of Graham are usually the service or shopping center for an agricultural based economy, but Graham is an exception. Graham does have business from the rural portion of Alamance County, but most of this is within a fifteen mile radius of the downtown area.

The Graham-Burlington economic base is very closely tied to the textile industry. Textiles, weaving, and knitting mills form the mainstay of the area's economy, while agriculture has been on the decline for the last ten to fifteen years. Agriculture is continuing to lose much of its importance in the County with more and more farm workers turning to industrial jobs in the mills of Burlington and Graham. This trend will continue as the move toward urbanization develops and the population centralizes in the cities and the suburbs.



The downtown area of Graham is part of a larger economic unit which services a wide trading area, the largest part of the unit being Burlington, with Graham acting as a satellite shopping area. Graham and Burlington are located within the Piedmont Grescent which will eventually develop into one of the largest urban areas or strips in the southeastern United States. Graham is bound to be affected by this growth and it will only be a matter of time before development pressures will be felt from all sides. The past and present trends in the local economies give several indications of what the existing situation may be. The three major economic areas that can be viewed with any degree of accuracy are Alamance County, Burlington and Graham. These areas represent the regional trading center of the population situated between Greensboro and Durham.



For the past twenty years, or from the early 1940's, Burlington has been experiencing considerably more growth than either Graham or Alamance County. Between 1940 and 1960 the population increased by almost 172%. This was due in part to several annexations, but above this there were still increases in the population. Graham's population increase has been more in line with the counties with Graham growing 78% in the same twenty year period and the County 50%.

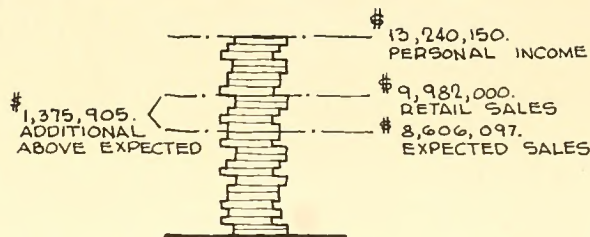
RETAIL SALES

In evaluating any commercial area it is necessary to understand its situation within a trading area and this is what has been done thus far. A study of regional areas provides much background material for comparison, but it does not furnish the actual statistics or pulse of the business community. Without this economic indicator it is hard to have a definite understanding of the specific area under study. For this reason it will be helpful to examine the retail sales figures for Graham, Burlington and Alamance County to see how much, where, and for what the moneys of the area are being spent.

In 1959 Graham had \$13,240,150.00 dollars in personal income and \$9,982,000.00 dollars in retail sales, which meant that the local businesses were accounting for 75% of the expendable income. The expected retail sales according to the state ratio (average income to sales for the state) would have been \$8,606,097.00, which gives an excess of \$1,375,903.00 or 15% above what was expected. This excess amount indicates that Graham is actually receiving some of its sales from customers who live outside the Graham city limits.

The period between 1958 and 1963 brought several changes that are reflected in the economy of the City. The number of businesses for the City as a whole has declined from 107 in 1958 to 70 in 1963. With this decline there has been predictable decrease in retail sales which amounts to a -9%. It also might be noted that during this same period of time, local payrolls went up 2.3%, which means that although more money was being earned less of it was staying in Graham.

The fact that Graham has no definable trading area of its own, and is totally included within Burlington's trade area makes it difficult to evaluate the economic capabilities of the Central Business District. It is certain that Graham receives many benefits from its location and in turn it is also certain that Graham loses some business that it ordinarily would be getting.



EXISTING LAND USE

The Central Business District or core area of any city or town is the collecting together of the diverse commercial activities and professional services that are required to serve and support the citizens of the city's trading area. Every city has at least one such area that represents the original town and its beginning.

The core area should provide the necessities of life such as food, medicine and clothing as well as the entertainment, services and luxuries. It is the grouping together of these uses that enables us to recognize particular land use patterns which have developed within the core area of Graham.

PRIMARY RETAIL - Primary retail shopping areas are generally located in the Central Business District or in large regional shopping centers. These trade establishments sell low bulk comparison and specialty items. Primary retail establishments can be broken down into two categories: 1) stores which generate their own trade such as department stores and variety stores and 2) apparel shops, shoe stores, jewelry and variety stores and similar establishments which are economically dependent upon the pedestrian traffic generators -- department stores and variety stores -- for supplying potential customers.

SECONDARY RETAIL - Secondary retail establishments usually sell "high bulk" items such as furniture, appliances, home furnishings, automobiles, farm equipment, hardware, lumber, building materials and similar goods. Merchandise in secondary trade establishments is relatively expensive and seldom purchased by the individual customer. Due to the expensive cost of secondary trade goods, the customer is generally willing to travel longer distances to compare merchandise between widely separated competing establishments. As a result, secondary retail establishments do not have to locate in close proximity to each other; instead, they often locate at independent locations along major streets or highways. In many instances, these establishments locate in areas which adjoin the Central Business District.

CONVENIENCE RETAIL - Convenience retail establishments merchandise goods commonly referred to as "convenience goods." They sell merchandise such as food, drugs, and gasoline which are purchased frequently. Establishments selling these goods generally serve a smaller market area than do either primary trade or secondary trade establishments. They are frequently located in outlying neighborhood shopping areas in order to be as near as possible to their customers. Food stores and gasoline stations generally do not prosper in the intensively developed core of the Central Business District since they require locations with convenience access.

ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL, AND ADVISORY SERVICES - Administrative, financial, and advisory services include offices or establishments performing either the management or administrative duties of government, business, and welfare agencies or providing monetary and professional services for the community. These include doctors' offices, lawyers' offices, accountants' offices, banks, the city hall, the post office and similar uses.

CONSUMER SERVICES - Consumer services include establishments providing services to the person. Establishments such as restaurants, barber shops, theaters, pool halls, hotels, newspaper offices, telephone offices, and similar uses are included.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES - Cultural and social services in the Central Business District include churches, libraries, and similar uses.

INDUSTRIAL SERVICES AND MANUFACTURING - Industrial service and manufacturing activities include all establishments engaged in manufacturing processes and all related industrial services.

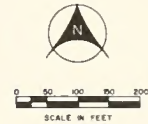
WHOLESALE TRADE, REPAIR SERVICES, STORAGE - This category includes all wholesale activities, mechanical repair services and enclosed storage.

TRANSPORTATION - Transportation establishments provide for the conveyance of passengers and freight from place to place.

VACANT FLOOR SPACE - The vacant floor space category includes all buildings or portions of buildings which were not being devoted to any use. Floor space being used only on a part-time basis was considered as occupied floor space. All storage space, either passive or active, was considered as occupied floor space.

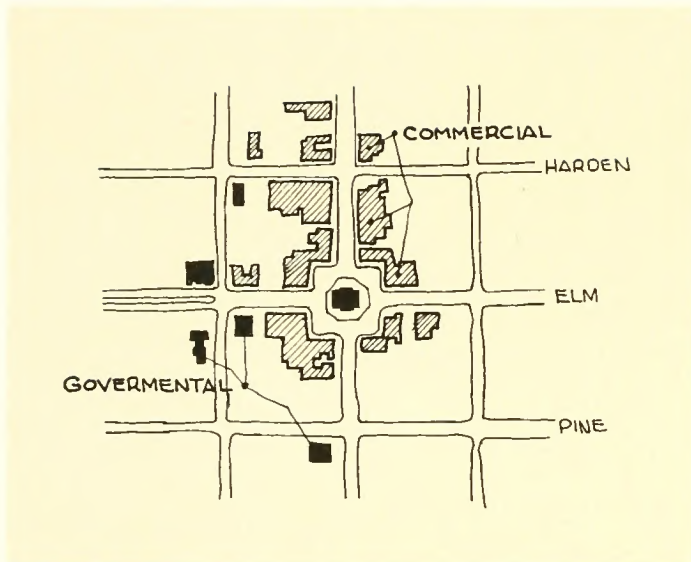
GRAHAM, N. C.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



EXISTING LAND USE

- PRIMARY TRADE
- SECONDARY TRADE
- CONVENIENCE TRADE
- CONSUMER SERVICES
- ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL, & ADVISORY
- SOCIAL & CULTURAL
- WHOLESALE & STORAGE
- REPAIR
- MANUFACTURING & INDUSTRIAL SERVICES
- TRANSPORTATION
- RESIDENTIAL
- v VACANT BUILDING



The downtown area of Graham is divided into two major categories which make up the bulk of the land use. The first large land use is the county court house and the related county buildings. The other is the commercial grouping.

The largest of the land use patterns are the commercial properties that front on Main Street between Elm and Harden Streets. This is the main shopping block of the City and is, along with the court house, the image that most customers have in mind when thinking of Graham. Shops in this area are generally department and variety types which handle low bulk comparison items although there are several high bulk or secondary retail establishments.

The area immediately to the south of the court house is used predominately for secondary retail businesses--furniture, appliances, automobiles and farm equipment--with a small amount of manufacturing located on Pine Street. There are also a large number of vacant stores facing the court house on the southeast corner of the square.

North of the court house and on the opposite side of Harden Street there is still another group of uses. These have no set pattern--doctor's offices, a bank, two primary retail stores, a real estate office and the only large supermarket in the first four blocks of the core area. Two more food markets are in the area, one a small independent owner-operated business and the other a large chain store recently constructed on the corner of Pine and Main Streets.

The second large land use within the downtown area includes county and city facilities. The fact that the court house and related county functions are in Graham has had a stabilizing effect on the core area. Although they in themselves do not produce a product, they do provide people and money within a given shopping area.

Graham's downtown area is much like many other small county seats throughout the State, but with two exceptions: the City has adjoining limits with an urban area roughly four times its size and it is located on Interstate 85 and within the Piedmont Crescent, which should provide a great stimulation for growth.

Graham's downtown situation is somewhat typical if considered from just the central area, but it is certainly unique when viewed in terms of its function within the regional shopping area. These two view points will be considered in this report with an attempt to set objectives for both areas.

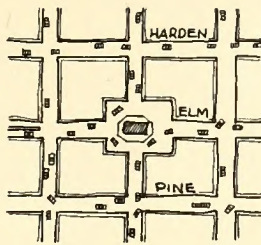
TRAFFIC

Almost every city in the United States is suffering from congested traffic and poor circulation. The downtown area, originally designed for small volumes of traffic is now completely unsuited for the vast numbers of vehicles that are in use. The yearly increase in the population, the improved rural roads and the development of the super highways only add to the already bad situation. Most downtowns have long since reached their automobile saturation point. There are many downtown areas with virtually no more room for the automobile.

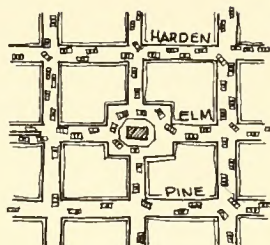
Graham has not entirely reached this point, but it can only be a matter of time before the situation gets to the point that downtown circulation will be much like that of Burlington. It is deceiving for the merchants to believe that the wide rights-of-way on Main and Elm Streets are going to eliminate the traffic and circulation problem. The wide streets are still convenient at present, but center street loading and unloading, double parking and increased numbers of cars quickly eliminate efficient circulation. The Preliminary Plan will discuss another approach to the efficient use of the wide streets for the future of Graham.

The latest traffic volumes for streets and roads within the Graham area show that Harden Street, one block west of Main Street, is carrying about 8500 vehicles a day and one block east of Main it is carrying 5400 vehicles per day. Customers trying to parallel park not only have more difficulty but cause traffic movement behind them to slow up and stop.

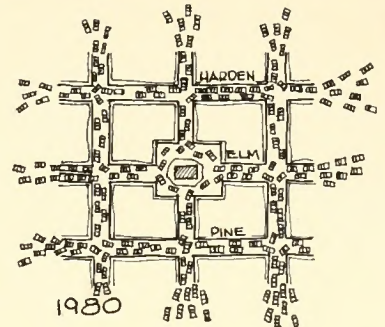
These volumes indicate that Harden is above capacity at present and with the turning movements and stop and start driving, the flow of traffic in the downtown area is greatly reduced. These volumes have been on the increase for the past few years and will continue to do so.



1940



1960



1980



Commercial Buildup

The commercial buildup taking place on Harden Street and Highway 85 will in time impede traffic flow to such an extent that the route will no longer serve as a major carrier. When this occurs, either a new route will have to be developed between Burlington and Graham or shoppers and commuters will begin to use the Interstate to travel between the two cities.

It is foreseeable that the areas along both sides of Harden Street between Main and the Interstate will become more and more desirable for commercial development as traffic volumes increase and that in time this section of the street will become congested in much the same way that West Harden is. Thus, it too will strangle itself as a major traffic carrier unless some precautions are taken soon.

Probably the most critical street to be considered at this time is Main Street between the Interstate and the Court House. This street will definitely be pressured to develop into a commercial strip. In fact, the movement is well underway with the building of the new supermarket, car wash and the new city hall. These first steps into totally residential blocks cannot lead in any direction but the total development of the entire street. The precedent has been set. However, in all the potential strip development situations mentioned little more can be done at this time than to recognize the problem and try to provide the best solution for the eventual development.

PARKING

Available parking is a prime requisite in any shopping area. Customers just are not going to spend money in an area where they have to take more time looking for a parking space than in actual shopping. This makes a bad situation for the customer and merchant. They both lose. The potential customer should be reasonably assured of adequate parking, fairly convenient to his destination and improved to the extent of being paved, lighted and the spaces marked.

Downtown Graham can be entered from several directions. The main driving pattern is to drive directly to Main Street, go down one side and, if no space is found, circle the court house square and try the other side. If no space is found there, the driver may consider driving to Cum-Park-Plaza or even Burlington, or if determined to shop in Graham, he can try to find a space in one of the two off-street parking lots not being used by an employee.

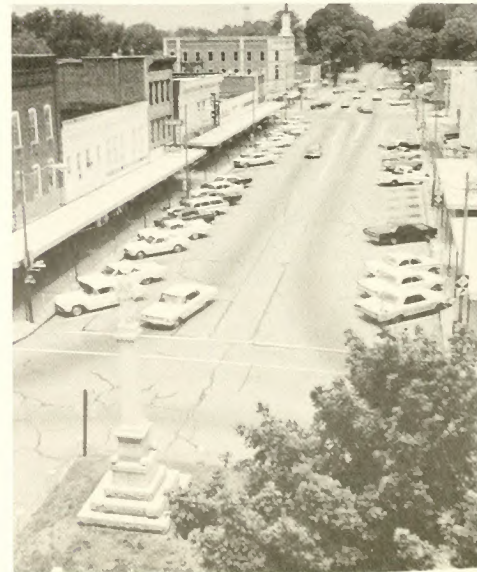


On-Street Parking

At present there are 273 one-hour metered on-street parking spaces and 14 twelve-minute limited time spaces located within the six block core area. These spaces are located on two and one half blocks of Main Street, two blocks of Elm Street and two blocks of Harden Street. In addition to the metered space, there are approximately 120 unmetered usable on-street spaces. However, many of these spaces are not convenient and around thirty of them on Pine and Main Streets are being used by Isley Knitting Mill employees.

The metered on-street spaces on Main Street appear to work quite well. The meters keep a fairly high turnover and customers appreciate the protection of the block-long canopy.

The metered spaces on Elm Street are not used as heavily as those on Main, but during any rush period these are the first to be filled up by any overflow. The narrowness of Harden Street plus its parallel parking spaces make this street a little less desirable for women customers, but because of its convenience it is usually filled. The 14 short term metered spaces located around the post office and in front of the present city hall are well used for short stops and appear to fill the need. There is also a pull off area on Main Street in front of the theater, but this is for temporary stops rather than parking.

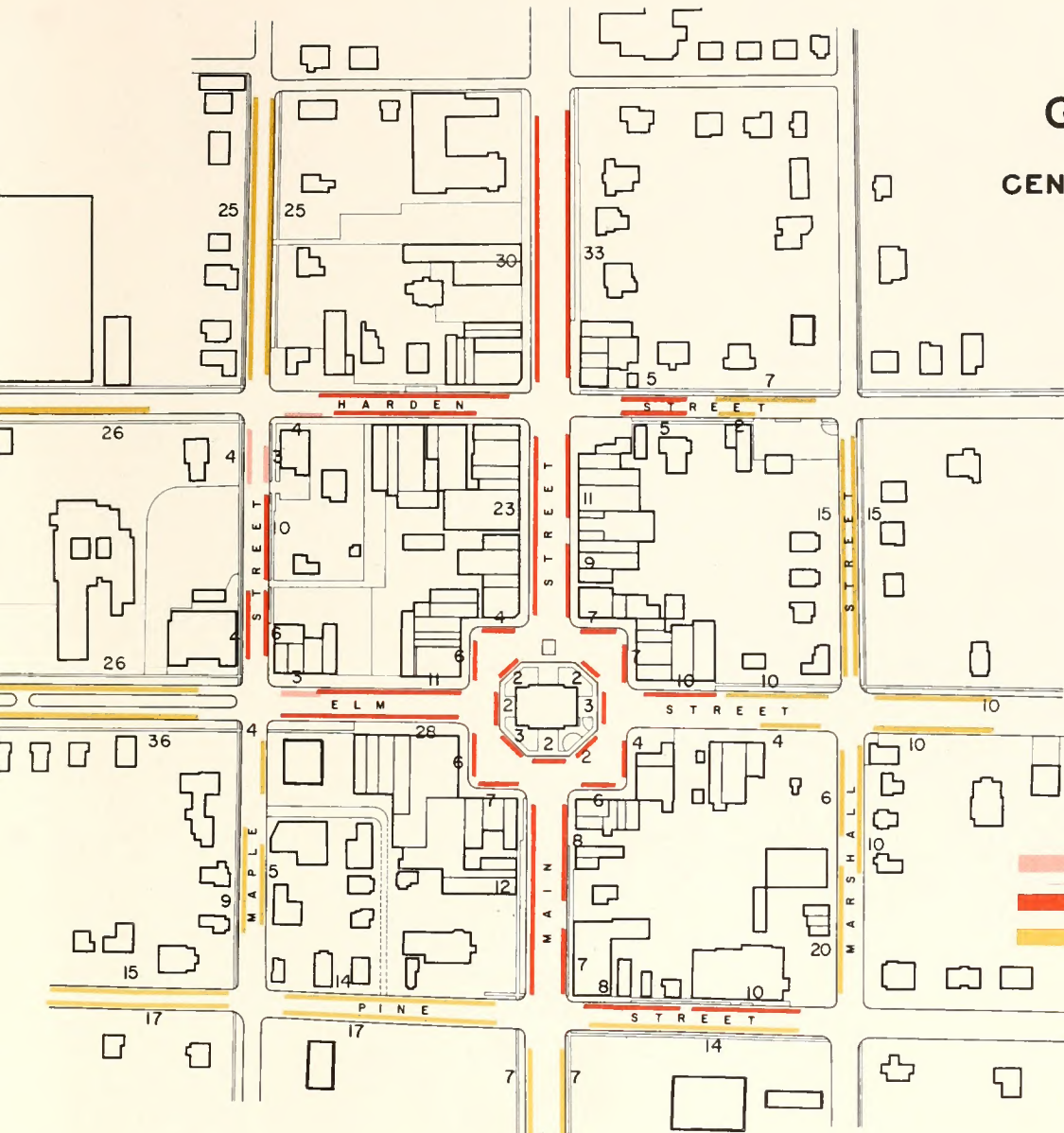


GRAHAM, N. C.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



0 50 100 150 200
SCALE IN FEET



ON STREET PARKING

12 MINUTE

1 HOUR- METERED, POSTED

UNLIMITED

14

27

29

TOTAL 57



Off-Street Parking

In addition to the available on-street parking, there is another source of parking that has been neglected. This source is the off-street parking that could be developed close in to supply the present and future needs.

At present the City has 45 off-street spaces around city hall and 25 on the corner of Elm and Marshall Streets. The Presbyterian Church on the north side of Maple Street provides 52 spaces that can be used for either customers or employers during the week. There are approximately 152 public spaces for specific use provided by merchants and businesses for their customer convenience. This makes a total of 279 spaces, 1/4 to 1/3 of which are being used by employees for all day parking. Not only are some of the employees using customer intended spaces, but they are using almost every nook and corner of the rear areas and back alleys. A count of these private spaces shows approximately 200 being used daily. These spaces are often located extremely close to the rear doors of the many shops and businesses in

the downtown area and it often seems inconsistent for the employee to park closer to the store or business than the customer can. Granted at present most of these spaces to the rear of stores are not the kind a customer might prefer to use, the potential sketch is still there and should be utilized if customer demands are to be met and his patronage encouraged.

Summary

There are approximately 921 parking spaces available in the downtown area. Of this number, 409 are set aside for the public to use, 152 are provided for specified customers, 240 are set aside for employees and private parking and 120 are available around the outer edge of the downtown area. However, as stated previously, most of these fringe spaces are inconveniently located and should probably be considered as private or employee parking.

In order to evaluate the existing number of parking spaces in relationship to the needs of Downtown Graham it will be necessary to use some form of measurement that can be viewed in terms of today's problems and tomorrow's needs. One such guideline is the standard set out in the Community Builders Handbook. This standard uses the basis that for each 400 square feet of gross retail floor space (this includes all storage and sales space) one parking space be provided for all secondary trade uses and two spaces be provided for each primary trade use. Any method of this sort cannot be considered entirely correct, but it will provide some insight into the problem at hand.

There are some 580,000 square feet of floor space on the ground floors of downtown Graham at present, and with the completion of the County Building, Duke Power Office and the new City Hall the footage will run nearly 620,000 square feet. Of this total number 150,000 square feet of wholesale, manufacturing and manufacturing service must be subtracted. These are generally incompatible with other core area uses and will eventually expand and need relocation. This will leave 450,000 square feet which should be provided with customer parking. With 221,145 square feet in the primary trade category at a two-to-one ratio there is a need of 1104 parking spaces for customers. In the remaining group, which includes the services and all government functions and the social forms, there is a need of 379 parking spaces. This makes a total of 1,483 parking spaces required if the downtown is to have what is considered a workable minimum.

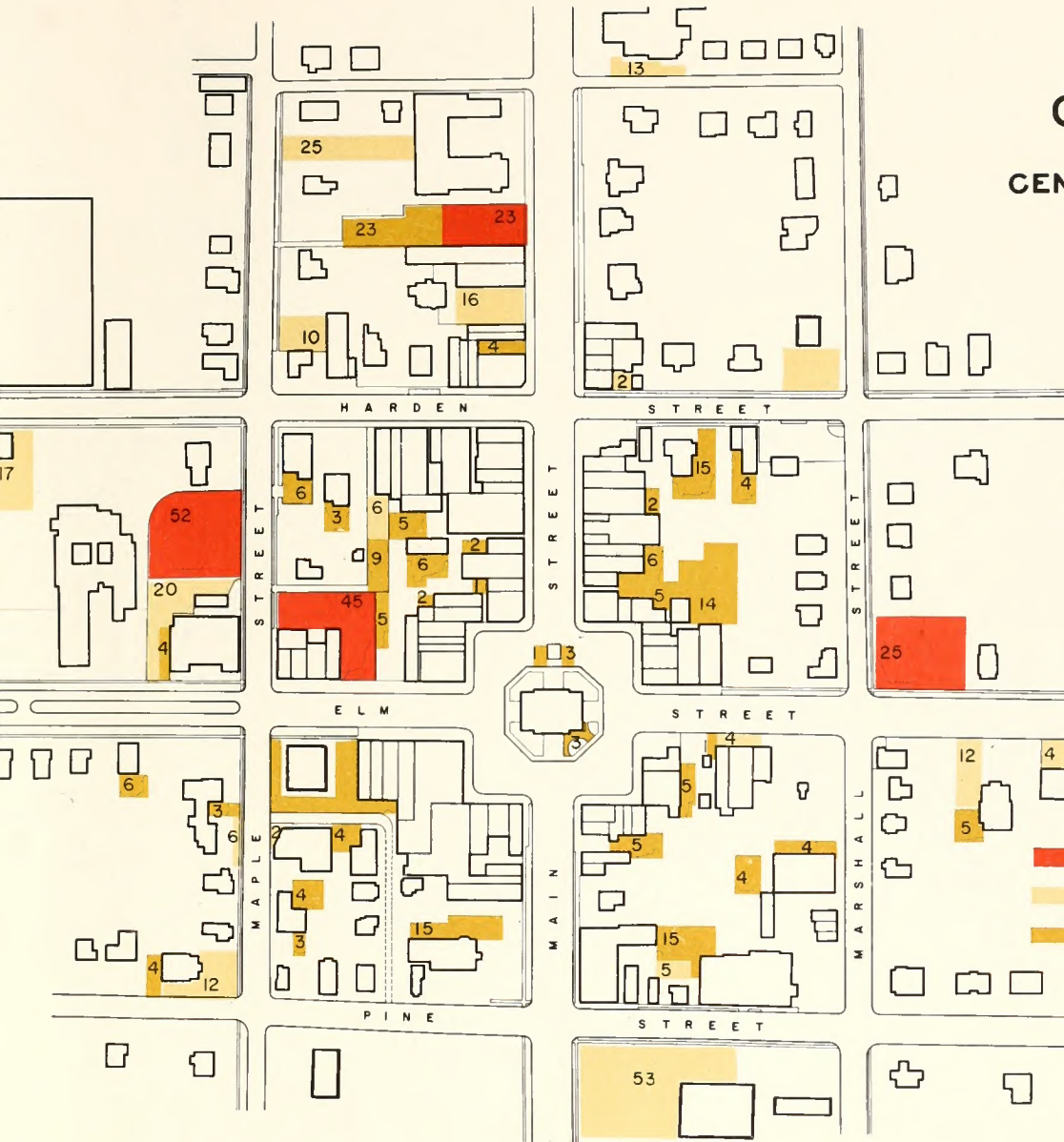
Comparing the number of existing spaces with the number needed there is a deficiency of 562 spaces and if we count only the spaces available to customers this would make a deficiency of 800 spaces.

GRAHAM, N.C.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



0 50 100 150 200
SCALE IN FEET



OFF STREET PARKING

PUBLIC	160
SPECIFIED PUBLIC	129
PRIVATE	<u>243</u>
TOTAL	532

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Walking or strolling within the downtown area of Graham is not the most enjoyable past time that an individual could expect to participate in during the course of a day's activities. Little attention has been given to the walking customer except to keep him from walking in the mud or dust. And even this does not apply to the off-street parking lots. No thought seems to be given to his surroundings unless he is in a private shop and many of these have much to do before they can be considered enjoyable. The shopping customer is left, for the most part, on a bare sidewalk or worse, on one that is cluttered with parking meters, signs, trash cans, utility poles, etc., and given very little in the way of scenic enjoyment. The conflict of man and the automobile is an ever-present problem with the pedestrian being at a distinct disadvantage. The automobile problem in terms of movement, routes, storage and safety controls have been well taken care of with every movement being considered from a traffic engineers point of view. The pedestrian on the other hand has won his walking spaces by default. The space not taken up by building, streets, parking, service alleys, and storage has reluctantly been given him and that only as long as it was located directly in front of the stores. This space then has been set aside as the pedestrian refuge. This corridor of concrete squeezed between buildings and overhanging automobile bumpers and interlaced with service alleys which allows trucks to cross the walkway at unsuspecting places comprises the area set aside for the ever-necessary pedestrian customer.

The very fact that each individual must leave his car and become a foot traveler before he can make a purchase would tend to indicate that much attention should be given to this aspect of the shopping trip. It is hardly logical to continue to ignore his movements on the street. The pedestrian must be given every consideration that will make his shopping trip more enjoyable and thereby encourage him to return to shop another day.

The sidewalks of Downtown Graham on Main Street are wider than the average walkways of most cities or towns. This is an important factor in developing better pedestrian facilities. Wide sidewalks allow large numbers of persons to move freely without bumping into other customers or causing undue congestion. It is unfortunate that the other streets of the downtown area do not have this width, but fortunately most of the shops and stores are located on Main Street. The narrower sidewalks are not in as good repair as the wider ones and the clutter of various street furniture of items is more apparent.



The single most effective effort made in the downtown area in the last few years has been the erection of unified canopies along most of the store fronts of Main Street. This group effort has improved the general appearance of the street extensively. It has given the street some unity and at the same time allowed individuals to decorate their store fronts at the pedestrian level where there is the greatest amount of customer awareness.

The signs that hang below the canopy have been kept simple and provide an excellent system for store identification. These signs are a good example of the results that can be accomplished when group cooperation is attained.

It cannot be overly emphasized that this sort of group cooperation will be the necessary factor in any action that takes place in the downtown area. There will certainly be those individuals who are not going to cooperate at first and, in some case not ever, but progress must be made in spite of these situations with the hope that eventually the large majority will realize the benefits and work together. This attitude of group effort will result in more overall accomplishments than any individual effort can. It is now only a question of having a direction and a set of goals for the merchants, city and interested citizens to follow in developing the downtown area into a unique shopping area.

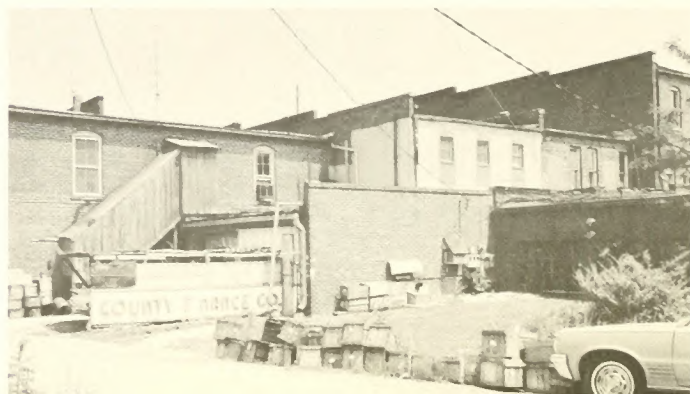


North Carolina State Library Raleigh

APPEARANCE

The word appearance can mean many different things to different people when applied to the downtown area of Graham. To one person it refers to the buildings, to another the condition of the streets and sidewalks, to still another it may refer to the abundant advertising signs lining the various streets and to some it may apply to the individual shop windows and their decorations. Of course the answer is each and all of these and many more related features. The appearance of the downtown is a collection of all its visual elements and the lasting impression that the majority of visitors carry home with them. For some unexplained reasons most businessmen spend much time and effort in maintaining and decorating both the interior and exterior of their homes yet do very little more than the bare minimum of maintenance on the inside and even less on the outside of their places of business. This trend has prevailed for years and the drab unexciting arrangement and appearance is an all too obvious fact of today's downtown area.

Graham's downtown area appearance must rate somewhere between just above average and below average, according to the particular part of the downtown being discussed. The area around the court house and on Main Street going north would be considered above average, as would the south entrance from Interstate 85, the west entrance from Burlington on Elm Street with the tree lined median strip and also the approach to the downtown from the north on Main Street by the Baptist and Methodist churches. Areas within the downtown area that are below average in appearance would include the area and buildings just south of the court house, the first block of West Elm Street, the western approach of Harden Street, and almost every rear entrance and area of every store, shop and office in the downtown area. This last statement may appear to be somewhat strong, but the sites have only to be examined to be judged. As stated before the unified canopy in the downtown area has done much to improve the appearance of Main Street. This improvement was one of the items mentioned most in the customer survey as an outstanding feature of the business area. This awareness of the customers proves that they appreciate and notice the improvements and it also indicates that if more improvements were made that more customers could be attracted to the downtown.



A good example of a business making an extra effort to develop a pleasant surrounding is the Hardee's Hamburger Drivein on the corner of Harden and Marshall Streets. The keeping of the existing trees and the planting of the shrubs along with the construction of the low brick wall all add up to a commendable effort. Extra effort of this sort will be an advantage to both the business and the City.

Conclusion

The buildings in the downtown area are, for the most part, on the decline, especially the upper stories. These areas appear to have been neglected for many, many years with most of the attention being directed at the pedestrian level. Several stores and shops have refronted and the results have been a welcome contrast. The rear entrances of the stores and shops as mentioned above, are in poor condition and will require much improvement before they will be acceptable as entrances the public would consider using. The development of rear entrances will have to be somewhat coordinated with the improvements to the rear parking lots, but should not wait until the lots have been completely installed.

Another obvious situation mentioned by many of the towns people is the condition of the streets around the court house and on Main Street. The street is not difficult or rough to drive on, but there are numerous patches in the pavements. These patches stand out noticeably and detract from the rest of the downtown.

If major shopping centers and businesses hire skilled professionals in the form of architects, landscape architects, engineers, and interior decorators to insure that the physical and mental environment is both pleasant and functional for the customer and the merchant it would seem that Graham could hardly do less. The problems of coordination between the different merchants may be exasperating and the results may seem slow in materializing, but most important projects develop slowly and Graham can no longer afford the luxury of standing still or of letting progress advance in a piecemeal manner. If Graham is going to improve its situation it has many shortcomings that it must contend with and the general appearance of the downtown area must be among the first to get attention.



MERCHANTS AND CUSTOMERS SURVEY

In order that some indication of the general attitudes of the merchants and customers could be gained 4810 questionnaires were distributed through the Graham, Burlington, and Alamance schools using grades three and four as the sampler. The merchants questionnaires were carried to each business office, shop, store and professional office within the Graham downtown area. Questions were selected by the planning board that could be used to draw some conclusions and show some public indication as to the major complaints of citizens and customers. This survey was used to get a background knowledge of the issues which appeared to be most popular or as in many cases unpopular with the public at large. The samples were taken from the basic economic areas of Graham, Burlington, and Alamance County in order to have a cross-section of the people within the overall trading area.

Merchants

Of the total number of questionnaires distributed to the merchants only 32.7% were returned and while this is not the most desirable number of replies to draw conclusions from it does represent a large segment of the total number of merchants located within the city limits of Graham. Rather than list each question and show the tabulated answers it was felt that it would be of more use at this point to generally outline the results rather than quote statistics. Many of the merchants had individual complaints and suggestions for much of the ills of the City, but it will be necessary to summarize only the ideas that were given the most attention in the replies.

One of the first items to come to light from the questionnaires is that over two-thirds of the merchant businessmen of the downtown area lease the space they presently occupy. This in itself may be a problem, but it could account for the lack of repair that is evident in many buildings and the general complaint from both merchants and customers that stores in the downtown area have a poor appearance. Absentee ownership is an undesirable situation not only because it creates lack of interest on the part of the owners for the stores and the City in general, but the lessee is often unable to improve the property.

Another problem given considerable attention was the existing parking situation. Most businessmen felt that there was a parking shortage and that something should be done about it. The shortage is understandable when it is realized that 80% of the downtown employees drive their cars to work and that more off-street parking is provided for the employees than for the motoring customers. It appears that the merchant is more concerned

that his employees have a convenient parking space than his customers. Even with the spaces provided for the employees the most universal complaint heard from the downtown merchants was that there were too many employees parking on the streets and feeding the meters.

This complaint was closely followed by the cries for more off-street parking. It was somewhat encouraging to note that over half of the merchants returning surveys indicated that they would be willing to help finance off-street parking. At the same time others in the downtown area felt that the City should bear the expense of providing them with off-street parking. And still others felt that there would have to be some cooperative effort between the City and the merchants.

Most merchants either did not know or care to list the business that they felt was their major competitor, but of the total returned 17% stated that Gum-Park Plaza was their biggest competition in the area. This figure would indicate that as in much of the State shopping centers are providing the parking, the new stores and larger varieties of merchandise that the downtown is not, therefore the downtown is losing business to them.

Sixty-seven percent of the merchants interviewed said they would locate in the same place if establishing a new business. This would indicate a certain confidence on the part of the businessman for the downtown Graham area and its present and future business potentials. Also of the merchants answering, the large majority said they would expand on their present site or at least in the downtown area. Over half of the businessmen who were contacted stated that they would be willing to participate in purchasing plants, trees, and containers if the City would provide the installation and maintenance. It is assumed more would be in agreement if more details were known about the cost and the final results.

In general the items that were listed as being the major problems of downtown Graham were as follows:

- I. 1. Inadequate customer facilities, such as restrooms, benches, lunch counters.
2. Congested downtown.
3. Absence of adequate loading space for trucks.
4. Poor appearance of downtown buildings and streets.
- II. 1. Absentee ownership.

- III.
 1. Lack of full variety and selection of goods.
 2. Inadequate street lighting.
 3. Inadequate window display lighting.
 4. Disinterested City Government.
- IV.
 1. Store appearance is generally out of date and unappealing.
- V.
 1. Inadequate on and off-street parking.
 2. Inconvenient opening and closing hours.
 3. Downtown buildings in poor condition.
 4. Congested streets leading to downtown.

Customers

The questionnaires for the customers were divided into three groups as described above and the results were tabulated on a group basis in order to have some means of comparison. As in the case of the merchants survey, it was felt that a generalized condensation of the information would be more informative rather than in table form.

The first group of questionnaires was distributed throughout the Graham area with about 62% being returned. Generally, it can be said that the citizens of Graham are loyal to their downtown area in shopping; however, there were several categories that were not consistent with this. Burlington was the leading choice in wearing apparel by almost double. Furniture and home furnishings were about equal with Burlington leading by just a few per cent. Farm equipment, medicine and drugs were all led by Graham with groceries being the highest getting over 80% of the sales. Professional services and entertainment were about 50 - 50 between Burlington and Graham with most people preferring to go to the Alamance County Hospital for their other medical needs. It appears that the professionals fare better in the competition between the two cities than do many of the merchants and businessmen.

About half of the people questioned in Graham indicated that they went to Greensboro about twice a year for shopping trips while only a few said they went to Durham to shop. It was noted also that over 90% of the people interviewed said they shopped in the downtown area of Graham at least once a week and over half of these more than twice a week. Of the shoppers interviewed over 75% stated that they had been shopping in downtown Graham five years or more.

To general questions in rating of shopping facilities, staff, and merchandise, the majority of the answers were in the average or good category with only a few exceptions. Dressing room facilities in clothing shops were rated very low and also the variety of merchandise seems to be one of the recurring items of all three of the survey areas which indicated the need for existing merchants to carry a larger selection of goods and the need for larger department type stores.

In the section dealing with suggestions for improving the downtown area it is significant to note that of the three areas surveyed, Graham, Burlington, and Alamance County, the first three items listed in each case were identical. The suggestions were as follows:

- 1) stores should be open one or more nights,
- 2) public restrooms should be provided in the downtown area, and
- 3) more off-street parking is needed.

This similarity of ideas would seem to indicate that there are indeed needs in these areas and that merchants would do well to eliminate these short comings. The order of the entire list for the three areas ran much the same.

Burlington

Of the total number of surveys sent out in the Burlington area a little over half were returned. This 50% sample revealed that the average Burlington citizen was more happy to do his shopping in his own downtown area or one of the nearby shopping centers of the area. Cum-Park Plaza rated higher than Graham in the amount of wearing apparel and groceries bought, but Graham rated higher in all other categories than did Cum-Park Plaza. It was interesting to note that over 35% of the persons interviewed in the Burlington area stated that they went to downtown Graham at least once a week for one reason or another, but most felt that they spent much less than 25% of their income in the downtown area.

It is not clear why, but the shoppers of both Burlington and Alamance County were less critical of the selection of merchandise than were the shoppers living in Graham. This may in part be due to the fact that the Graham citizens are in the downtown area more often shopping for items and therefore have occasion to notice the number of articles they cannot find.

Again in the section rating shops, merchandise and personnel the Burlington shoppers rated all facilities higher than did the local shoppers with many ratings in the GOOD and EXCELLENT categories. There was also a higher rating in terms of the quality of the merchandise. The general opinion for improving downtown shopping was to establish more variety and department stores.

Alamance County

The replies to the questionnaires distributed throughout the Alamance County area were somewhat different, as would be expected, than the other two areas. The county shoppers preferred downtown Burlington over downtown Graham, but the preference was not in proportion considering the relative size of the two cities. Graham is getting more of the business than it might be expected to and in the case of doctors Graham was rated slightly above in number of visits to the downtown area. Thirty percent of the county shoppers, as in the case of the Burlington and Graham shopper, average about two trips to Greensboro a year to do shopping and seldom go to Durham.

Of the county people interviewed 60% lived from two to eight miles from the downtown area of Graham and approximately 55% indicated that they went downtown at least once a week. These figures seem to indicate that there is some attraction to the Graham business area that many shoppers prefer over either Burlington or the various shopping centers, which are as easily accessible. The ratings of the shops, merchandise, and personnel did not indicate anything out of the ordinary with most categories being listed GOOD or FAIR. Again as in the other areas the one factor which came up was the lack of variety or selection of merchandise, and the need for a large department store.

General Conclusions

The merchants survey and the three area surveys dealing with downtown Graham brought out pressing needs in the minds of the people interviewed.

- 1) More variety and a wider selection of merchandise within the downtown area is definitely needed. This might come in the form of increased inventory of existing business or with the building of a new department store. Both could work to accomplish the same goals. The need of a shoe store was mentioned specifically in each of the customer surveys.

- 2) The need for more and convenient off-street parking is evident now and will become even more urgent as the City grows. The consensus of the survey seemed to be that this would have to be supplied through some cooperative effort of the merchants and the municipal government.
- 3) Public restrooms was another use mentioned by most of the groups interviewed. This was more evident in the groups from outside of Graham. The problem will best be solved by some combination of merchant and city or county effort - either by providing better facilities in the individual stores or establish one central unit in addition to the one in the county court house.
- 4) The feeling that the stores should stay open at least one scheduled night a week was clearly indicated. This could be an appropriate time to hold special sales throughout the downtown area and advertise downtown as a unit shopping area.
- 5) One of the more general suggestions put forth in many different ways was that the downtown would do well to have a clean-up -- fix-up campaign for the stores, buildings and public areas within the downtown areas. This would be a first step toward giving the downtown a new identity and creating some feeling of group activity rather than each merchant being an island to himself.

Many other worthwhile suggestions were recommended and all have been considered and some of the more general ones will be used, but it is not possible to consider them all at this time.

SECTION

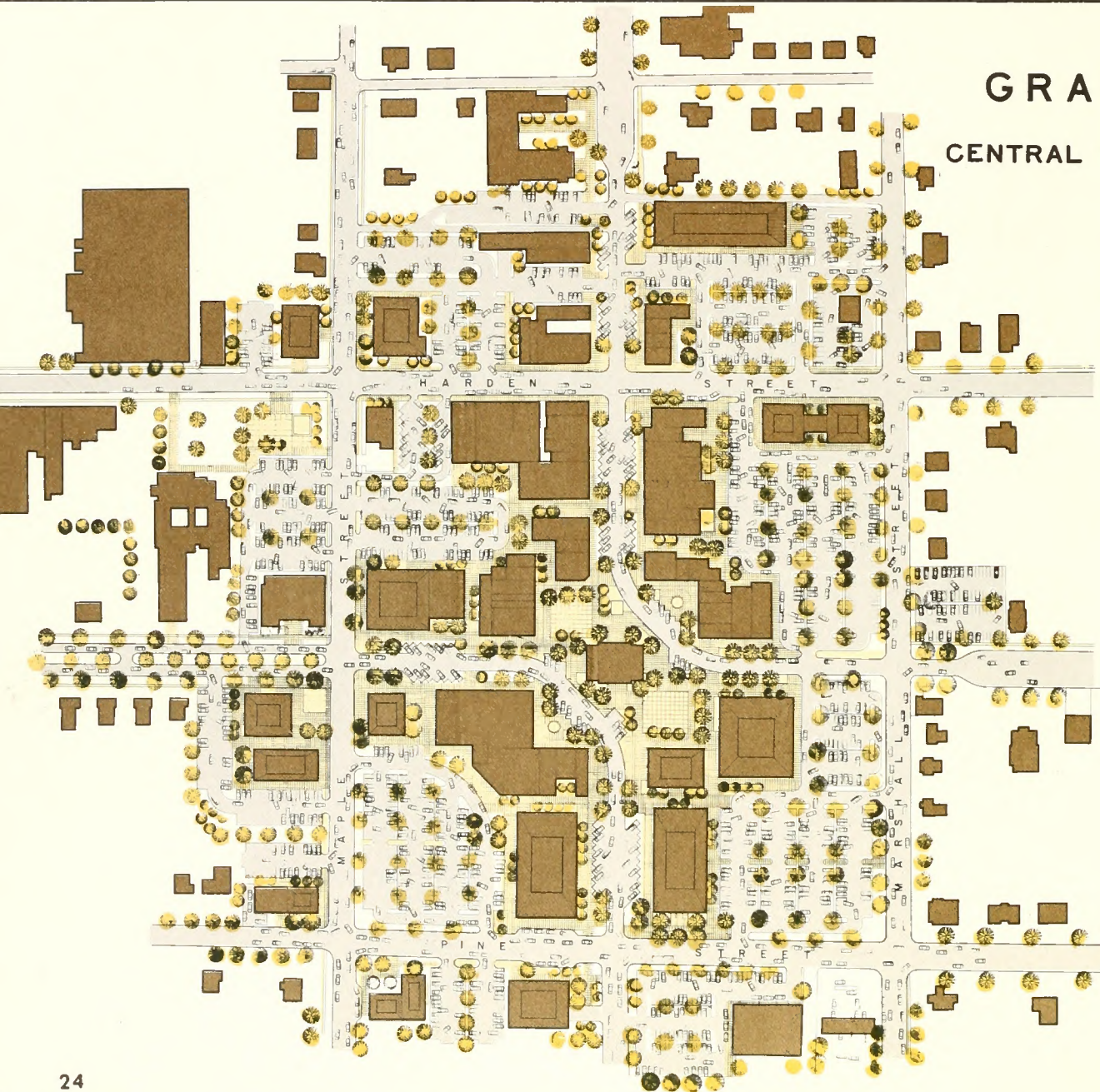
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GRAHAM, N. C.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



0 50 100 150 200
SCALE IN FEET



THE PRELIMINARY PLAN

The Preliminary Plan in its basic form will attempt to unify the retail and business core of the city into a true shopping area which not only provides all of the shops, stores, domestic and professional services, but also creates a desirable atmosphere for social activities and the physical amenities that enhance and enrich daily life.

Circulation (Access)

The convenient accessibility of any shopping area is a fundamental requirement that must be met if the facility is going to succeed. Downtown Graham is no different. It must be convenient for the people in Graham, Burlington, the County and on the Interstate to come to the City's core to shop.

It is proposed that the downtown area be tied by means of convenient streets and highways to the entire Burlington - Graham County trading area. The City has at present a Major Thoroughfare Plan that has been properly adopted and approved by the Advance Planning Section of the Highway Commission.

Further it is proposed that the main streets in the business area be so re-routed that they create new areas of development for outdoor improvements. This new traffic flow will to a great extent, eliminate unnecessary traffic and favor the shopping motorist as well as the pedestrian customer.

The implementation of this system will give Graham a far wider range from which to draw its customers. Therefore, the completion of this thoroughfare plan should be one of the primary objectives of the City.

Parking

It is not enough to get the cars and customers to the downtown area. Once they arrive the automobile must be stored. It is proposed that each block will have a plan to establish its own supply of off-street parking. Most of the blocks do not, even with on-street parking, have adequate amounts of parking for peak periods of shopping and it is mandatory that these needs be met. In general the principle of center block parking with rear entrance access to the stores and shops has been uniformly applied to the entire downtown area. With this approach it is felt that the existing shortages in parking can be met and that much of the future needs will be taken care of.

Pedestrian

In order to promote and encourage pedestrian traffic it is proposed that a system of landscaped and improved walking areas for the downtown be provided throughout the shopping area both on the streets and in the parking areas.

This development will be concentrated in the areas that will serve the most numbers of walking customers, but should in the long run be implemented throughout the entire downtown shopping area. The creation of crossing lanes will encourage total shopping while the establishment of the display courts will generate many more pedestrians in the area. In addition to the walking areas fountains, benches, light fixtures and extensive landscape development should be located in the downtown to reinforce the enjoyment of the walking customer.

Appearance

Along with the needs of the customers in terms of movement there are visual and convenience considerations that have to be made.

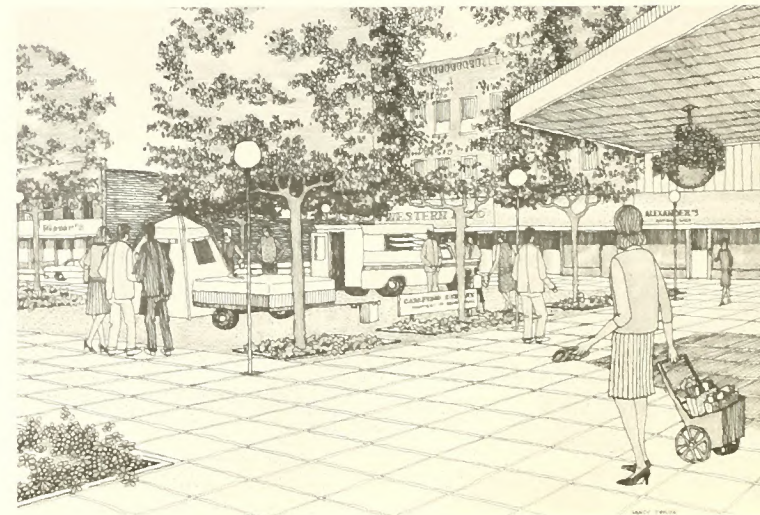
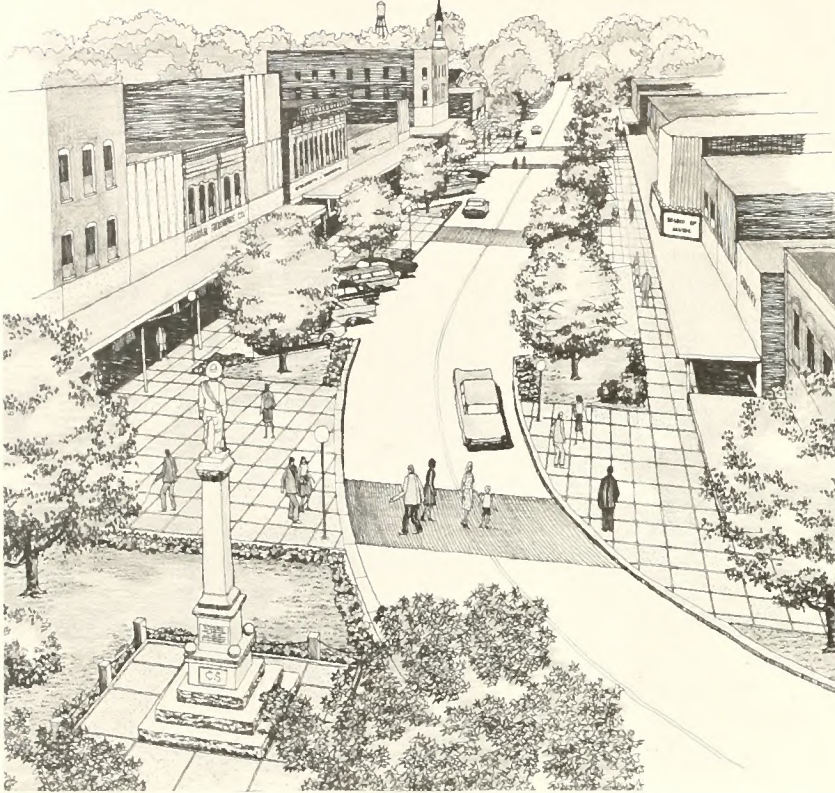
The pleasing impression that well maintained shops and buildings give can in themselves be a significant contribution to the purpose of improving the downtown. Good maintenance is to be strived for in every aspect whether it is in the front of the store, inside, or at the rear.

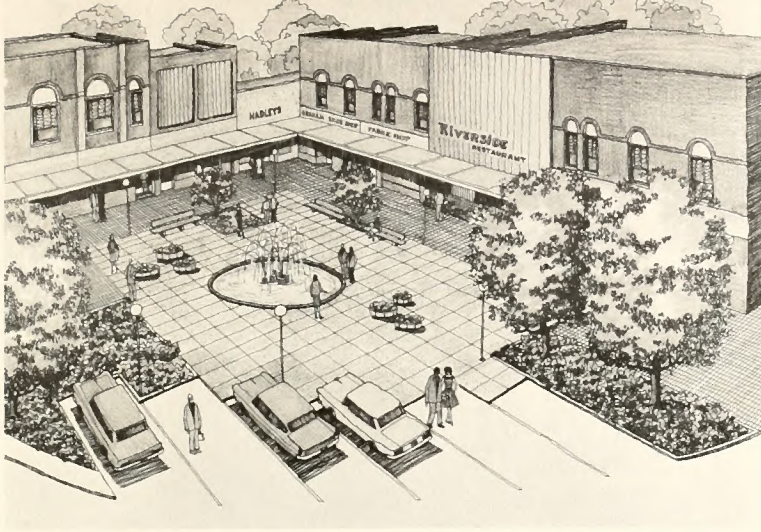
A major consideration for the downtown should be the general condition of the building fronts. Although much work has been done in the downtown area recently there is still a great deal that could be accomplished. Many of the stores and shops could improve their appearance simply by removing excess signs and the cleaning and painting of materials. As mentioned in the section concerning the customer survey general building appearance both inside and out was one item that the individuals interviewed thought needed attention.

Identity

If a shopping facility is to be remembered it should have an identity that is uniquely its own. An impression that the customer, the visitor, and the worker can take home after a visit. The present identity Graham now has is that of a one street shopping town with a court house at one end.

All aspects of the preliminary plan should have as a secondary motive the creation of an identity or image for the entire downtown area.

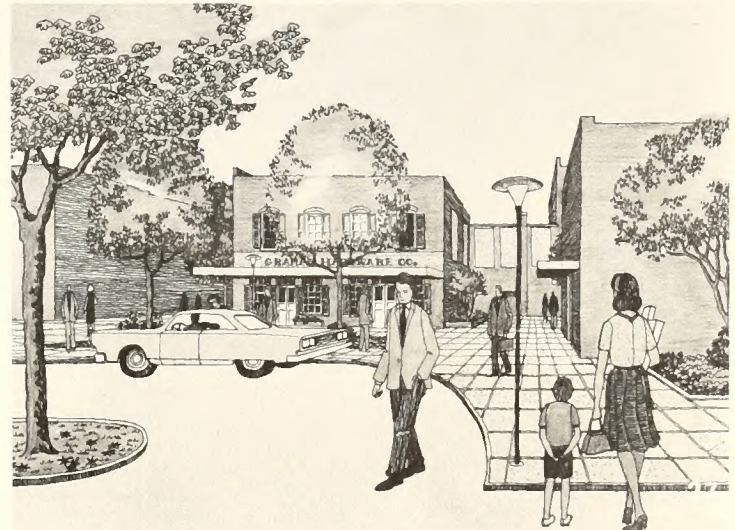


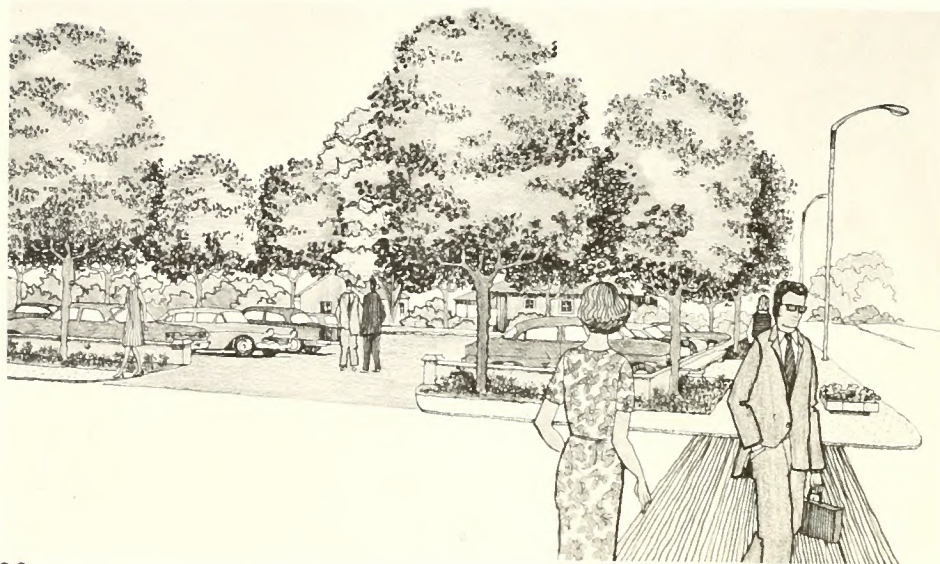


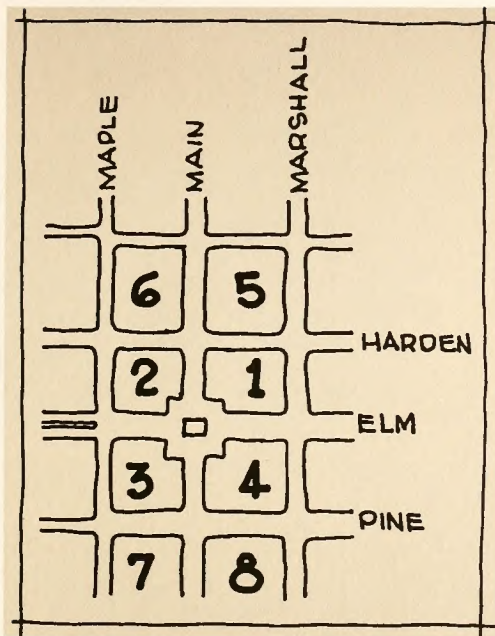
Objectives

The final appearance of downtown Graham in 1985 may well not resemble the preliminary plan presented in this study, but if the over-all objectives of the plan are carried out then the needs of the downtown will have been met and the problems of orderly growth and development will have been solved.

- 1) Develop the Downtown area in the best manner possible to promote business and social activities.
- 2) Provide efficient traffic controls and circulation.
- 3) Provide adequate amounts of off-street parking convenient to the shopping areas.
- 4) Develop convenient pedestrian circulation patterns.
- 5) Insure that ample space is available for expansion and future growth.
- 6) Establish means of service to all commercial facilities.
- 7) Simplify the signs of the downtown area and remove any items that detract or clutter the upper levels of the building.
- 8) Attempt to implement the proposed plan and objectives in such manner that a character will develop which in turn will establish a positive identity for the downtown area.







BLOCK ANALYSIS

For the convenience of discussion the downtown area has been divided into eight blocks. Each block will be looked at in terms of existing buildings, the different uses, and the potentials or problems that it may have. The preliminary plan proposes a definite pattern of development for the future. The block analysis recognizes this, but in the analysis it must be understood that there are many different approaches and solutions to the same problems and only one of these is presented here.

Block one contains almost one third of the primary retail stores in the downtown area and should be encouraged to develop until it has reached its fullest potential. Most of the buildings and uses in the block that front on Main or Elm Streets are desirable and generate their own share of business. The rear and center areas of this block offer as much potential parking as any in the downtown. For the twenty-year period it is proposed that most of the existing buildings will remain or at least be renovated in the same location and that all of the residences in the block will be removed to allow for expansion. Space has also been allowed for a new building which could locate either on Harden or Elm Street.





Block two is the counterpart of block one and is as strong commercially, if not stronger. From the post office on Harden Street all the way around to the Western Auto Store that faces the court house, with exception of the funeral home on Harden Street and two vacant stores near the billiard parlor this block presents a unified business front. The space occupied by the building group containing the present city hall and the fire station is in generally bad repair and should in the future be made available either for new buildings or developed for more parking. The center of the block, while not as large as block one has a certain amount of open space that should be developed for parking and walkways.



Block three has a mixture of different uses and a certain amount of vacant and marginal business that should be replaced and the structures renovated. Also the residences in the center of the block will in time have to be removed along with the sandwich shop on the

corner and the office next to it. The funeral home although old is in excellent condition and probably will remain until the use outgrows the structure or an acceptable offer of purchase is made. The development of a large department store in this area could only come if sufficient parking and buildable area was available. The construction of the new county building in the block will certainly make the business spaces around the block be more desirable.



The southeast corner of the Court House Square or block four has the greatest variety of uses of any block in the downtown area, but in general they do not conform to what is considered desirable for the main business area. The buildings that face the court house are either vacant or contain marginal businesses. At least a third of the block is occupied by a mill that is housed in eight or nine different structures. It is assumed that the mill will have to expand in the future and that a new location and building can be found in the Graham area to accommodate this move. This relocation would open over half of the block. The Ford tractor and implement dealer has the next greatest investment in the block and would remain until such time as expansion or purchase caused his relocation.

The preliminary plan shows this entire block as being completely redeveloped with new buildings and ample off-street parking. The need for a major retail generator, such as a large department store has been voiced time and time again by the merchants and the customers at large. It is felt, after having talked with several representatives from large chain department stores that the need for a sizable tract of land will be necessary to attract any desirable store. This tract should be assembled and offered to them as part of a unified plan. It is felt that this is the only way that any major firm is going to consider downtown Graham over a location in Burlington or in a shopping center. The pedestrian connection and development around the court house is an attempt to tie this emerging area to the existing commercial area so that they may benefit from each other.



It is necessary to jump to the other end of the downtown area to examine block five. This block at present have very little commercial activity in it. The main buildings which face Main Street are occupied by doctors offices and insurance and real estate firms. The newest business to open is the Hardee Hamburger drive-in on the corner of Harden and Marshall Streets. The opportunities in this block are mixed. This block should in the future, as it does today, act as the buffer between the commercial core and the residential area to the north. It is felt that the Methodist Church should represent the maximum in northern commercial development and that the area between the church and Harden Street will eventually be developed commercially. This potential development would of course necessitate the purchase and removal of the residences in the area. The preliminary plan shows only half of this area as being developed with parking and buildings. Block six is in much the same situation as block five with the exception that it does have several commercial generators in the form of a supermarket and bank with drive-in facilities on Main Street and an appliance dealer on



Harden Street. The three story building on the corner of Main and Harden is in a deteriorated condition with a small business on the first floor and the top two floors left vacant. If adequate parking could be developed this site should be considered for a new location of a department store.

Again as in block five a church, the First Baptist, should serve as the outer limit of the commercial development in this direction.

Block seven is at the extreme south end of the business area and really should only be considered as a half block. This area is experiencing the first new growth it has had in many years. The location of a Duke Power Company office and the construction of the new city hall and fire station should give this area new emphasis and create much new activity in the area. The location of these buildings will doubtlessly increase the demand for development on Main Street which should not be encouraged until the original core area has been revitalized to a higher level. This development of Main Street will come in time, but for the best interest of the City it should be developed with the highest standards that can be enforced.

The north half of this block has enjoyed some new activity just as block seven has. The building of the new Winn-Dixie Supermarket and the construction of the Minute-Car-Wash will contribute even more to the activity mentioned in the paragraph above. These two facilities will remain as they are for some time to come and the preliminary plan will accept them as the southern limit of the commercial core area. The only change that is proposed in this area is that the parking lots should be improved to the extent of locating some trees around the perimeter and between the parking bays. Even if this meant giving up several parking spaces it would certainly soften the appearance of the expanse of pavement and contribute that much more to developing more enjoyable and pleasant new downtown.

Miscellaneous

County Building Complex

Other than the numbered blocks there are several other situations that should be considered. The first of these is the complex of county facilities that is developing around the intersection of Maple and Elm Streets. The new county annex building, the jail building with its yard and house and the county agricultural building form what is the basis of a county government grouping. It is logical to assume that in the years to come these facilities will have to be improved and there should be some thought given to this potential development. The preliminary plan proposes that the existing jail site should be the next area of development. The jail is approximately twenty-nine years old and will need to be replaced to meet the needs of both the County and the City. At the time of replacement additional land should be purchased to increase the tract so that an adequate jail and yard can be built along with another county office building. Also ample parking should be provided for the employees and visitors. It is even conceivable that the area occupied by the buildings on the northeast corner of the intersection of Maple and Elm Streets could also be used for new building for the County should the need arise.

Tree Planting

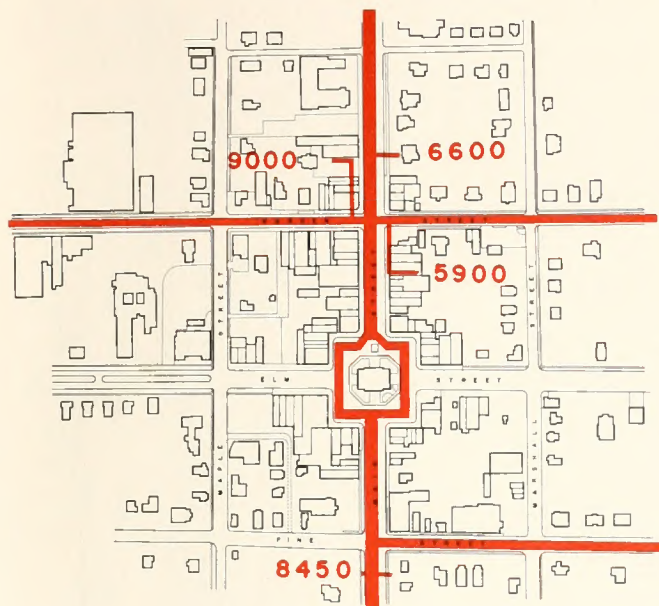
Every effort should be made to protect the section of Elm Street that has the tree lined median strip. Care of existing trees and the planting of new trees cannot be over-emphasized. The planting of new trees should be developed into a continuing year to year process. The tree lined streets that most of us enjoy today were planted many years ago by individuals who are not around today to see them. The value of having trees is one of the amenities that cannot be measured in dollars and cents, but definitely has a great influence on the character of the downtown area. The image that the business core area conveys must be pleasant in the minds of the shoppers. Trees and landscape in general can have great influence in creating pleasant surroundings.

Buffers

The tendency has been in the past for commercial development to strip along major thoroughfare and cause congestion and weaken the position of the downtown area. To further prevent this, every effort will have to be made on the part of the merchants and businessmen to convince fellow merchants to locate in the core area. The buffers mentioned above along with the Presbyterian Church and the Kayser-Roth Plant to the west and Marshall Street to the east should serve as the visible limits of the downtown area.



C.B.D. TRAFFIC VOLUMES



VEHICULAR TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

The preliminary plan will make no major changes in this over-all Burlington Graham Thoroughfare plan as adopted by the Advance Planning Section of the Highway Commission and presented in the over-all Development Plan for Graham. As can be seen by the accompanying map the thoroughfare plan provides for a very close inner loop around the main four blocks of the downtown area and this loop conforms to the needs of the preliminary plan. It has been necessary to change some of the sections of Main and Elm Streets in order to tie the downtown area together in some form that will allow convenient flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This modification will be less convenient for those people using the downtown area as a short cut, but this is part of the solution for eliminating some of the congestion in the business area. If an individual is simply using the downtown as a road to reach some other destination he is causing unnecessary congestion for the customers that are there trying to maneuver, park and shop. This through traffic should be encouraged to use alternate routes for their own convenience as well as for the alleviation of the central area.

The change in the traffic flow around the court house will consist in closing the northwest and the southeast quadrants of the traffic circle. This will eliminate, or at least discourage, through traffic and encourage the customer with business in the downtown area. By closing these sections of the traffic circle, Main Street from the south will tie into Elm Street on the west side of the court house. North Main Street will then tie into the east end of Elm Street. This system will provide slow traffic carriers between the four streets of the inner loop system. With this system it will be more convenient for the fast traveler going across town to remain on the loop and the shopper to come into the downtown area on Main Street or Elm Street.

At present Main Street is carrying much of the traffic going from the Interstate to the north side of the City and into the County on the Graham-Hopedale Road. This traffic, according to the Major Thoroughfare Plan, should be split at the exit ramp of the Interstate and carried around either side of the downtown area on Maple Street and on Marshall Street. In order for these streets to meet this function there will have to be some realignments at the ends of the street.

Maple and Marshall streets coincide with the west and east sides of the inner loop and would allow the downtown to be readily accessible to, but yet not congested by this traffic that is going across town. This system will also relieve the situation when and if the south end of Main Street is developed commercially as is now indicated. The improvement of these two streets should be on the list of priority projects to be constructed by the State Highway Commission. The City should also begin to acquire rights-of-ways by option or purchase for the necessary extensions.

Harden and Pine streets will form the other half of the inner loop with Harden being the larger carrier for some time to come due to its direct connection with Burlington to the west and the Interstate to the east. This street is at present becoming less and less efficient as road side development continues to congest its movement. It is debatable to what extent Harden can be improved at its extremities, but for the area between Marshall and Maple streets parking could be removed to allow for the smoother flow of traffic. This removal of parking in any similar situation in the City can not take place until sufficient off-street parking has been provided to replace the lost spaces.

PARKING

Discuss any shopping area in the State and one point certain to come up is the amount and relative convenience of the parking supply. Quality of merchandise as priced and ample parking are probably the two most important deciding factors in the success or failure of any shopping facility. Downtown Graham is no different and while the question of quality of merchandise must be solved by the individual merchant, the problem and solution of adequate parking must be met as a group effort by merchants, city officials, county administrators and citizens at large. Just as each stands to lose by inaction, all stand to gain by the actions and efforts made by the group. Convenient off-street parking must be provided whether it is done by a Parking Authority or by the merchants. Graham must meet this basic need if it is sincere in its desire to establish a successful shopping facility.

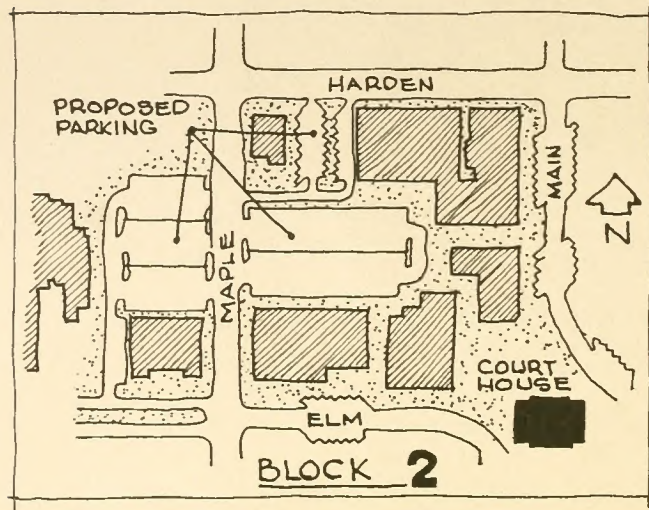
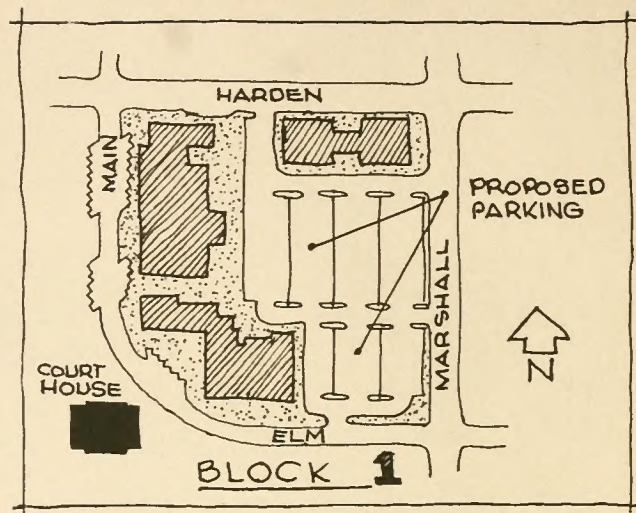
The preliminary plan proposes to provide the needed parking spaces in the following manner. Each shopping block must have its own supply of parking with auxiliary parking near by.

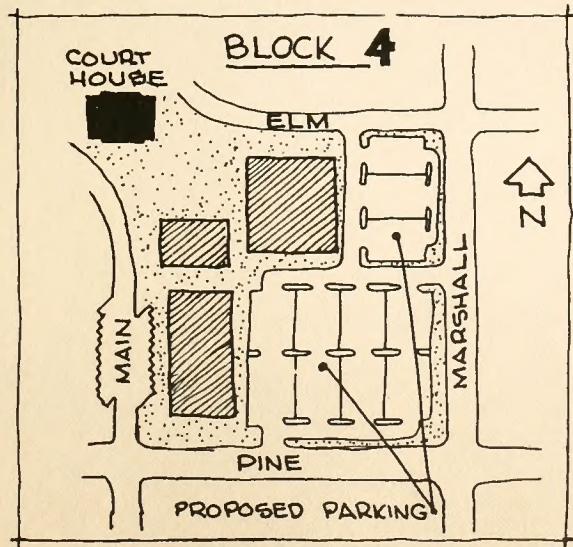
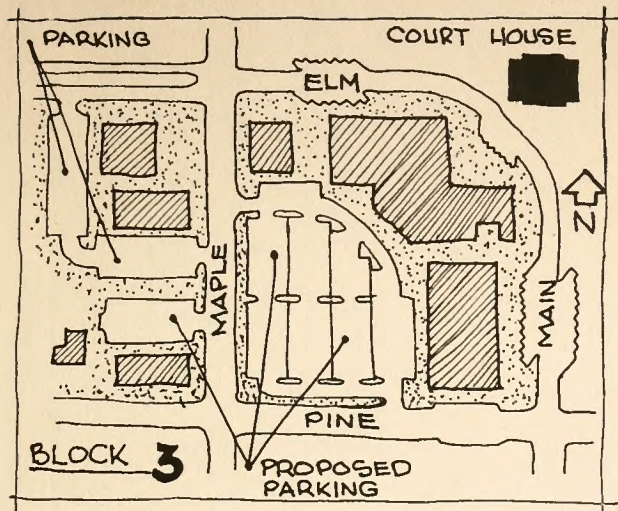
BLOCK 1

The block bounded by Harden, Main, Marshall and Elm streets provides the best opportunity to supply immediate parking for itself and the downtown. The rear or center of this block is vacant to a large extent and is being used for some disorganized parking at present. The area is quite large and could be developed in stages with the first stage being the improvement and reorganization of the center area. This in itself would supply well over one hundred spaces without having to remove any major business or dwelling structures. As the need arose the purchase of the five residences in the block would be necessary to enlarge the parking area. Depending on the arrangement of the spaces over two hundred and fifty cars could be parked in this enlarged area alone. This source of parking would benefit every merchant in the downtown area.

BLOCK 2

The block on the opposite side of Main Street and bounded by Main, Elm, Maple and Harden streets does not have the immediate potential for abundant off-street parking, but if staged properly could meet its needs in the future. If the area in the center of the block and including the parking area now provided by the City can be cleared of the storage buildings, reorganized and improved it could accommodate some 150 cars. This would also be reinforced by the lot furnished by the Presbyterian Church and give a total of 250 spaces between the two lots.





BLOCK 3

The area located within the block to the southwest of the court house and containing Moser's Incorporated will have the most difficulty obtaining adequate parking in the near future. Time and business pressures will cause some of the marginal investments to relocate which will open up new spaces that can be developed into parking. The preliminary plan shows one approach to new development over a long period of time. The final solution will depend on the individual action taken in the area. As shown on the plan, approximately 180 spaces are provided. This figure would vary greatly according to the layout of the lot and the amount of space that is available during the different stages.

BLOCK 4

This block, as described in the section on Block Potentials, is to the southeast of the court house and at present has very little commercial activity. The preliminary plan in proposing the redevelopment of the entire block has tried to provide adequate parking for the amount of floor space that would be necessary for a large department store. A minimum of 245 spaces is shown on the plan which would more than meet the needs of the 35,000 square feet indicated in the new building. This amount of parking would give close to a three to one ratio of parking to gross retail floor space which is outstanding for a downtown shopping area. (Most cities strive for a one to one ratio.) This ratio of three to one is competitive with the shopping centers in the area and would allow any department store to locate here with confidence.



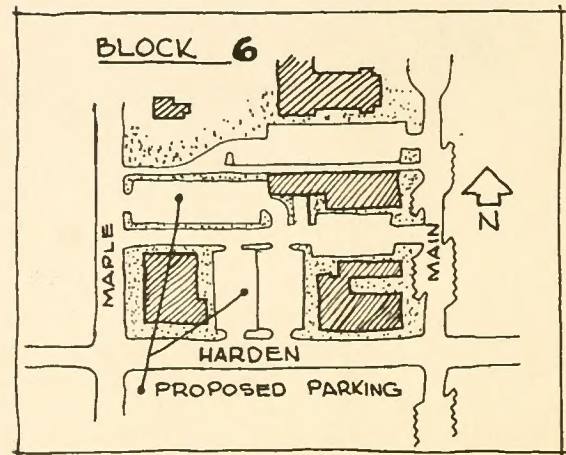
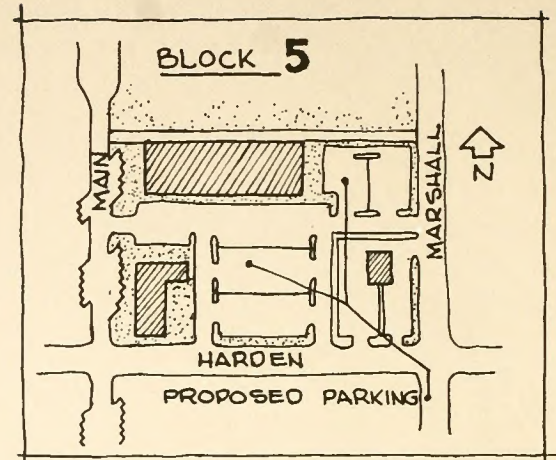
BLOCK 5

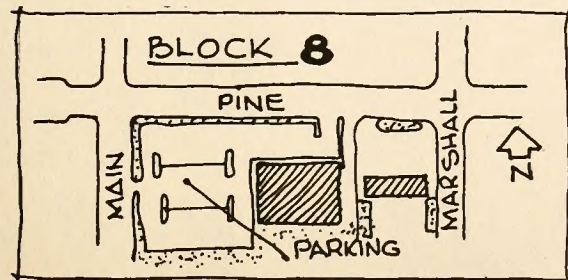
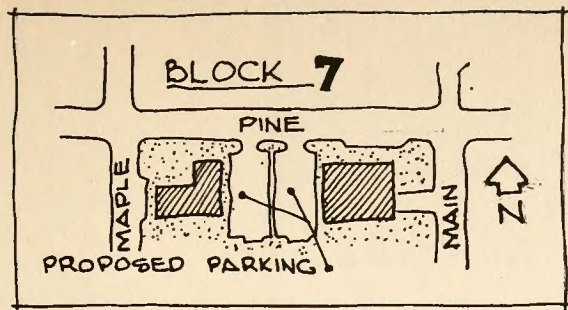
Block five, like Block four, has very little commercial development, but potentially could develop and have a critical need for parking. At present parking needs for the downtown could be helped in this block by developing parking lots in the areas now occupied by residences to the north and east of the building on the corner containing the realtor's office and the clinic. Two houses would have to be removed but one is already sandwiched between Hardees and a boarding house and the other is directly across the street from a supermarket. It is felt that at least 75 spaces could be located in this area. The preliminary plan shows an over-all development plan for the area which contains about 220 spaces for the block.

BLOCK 6

At present the only large commercial generators of customers in this block are the supermarket, the bank and appliance store. Each of these has a certain amount of off-street parking and at present no great shortage exists. And, although this is true the parking needs of the block must be looked at in terms of solving two different problems. First, the needs of the businesses contained within the block must be met and second, the needs of the larger group of businesses located on Main and Harden Streets must be satisfied. If any new commercial facilities are built in the block it will be necessary to develop more parking at the same time. The Baptist Church is already sharing a parking lot with the bank and this sort of cooperation should be encouraged in the future.

The preliminary plan shows some new development in the block and has provided parking for the new uses. It is felt, however that provided parking in this area at the present time would be beneficial to the entire downtown area. The block would be convenient for customers to park and then walk across the street to shop. Approximately forty five to sixty five parking spaces could be provided if the two residences facing Harden Street and the one located in the center of the block were removed and the area developed properly. An additional twenty five to thirty spaces could also be located in the space now occupied by the first house on Maple Street behind the appliance store.





BLOCK 7

The block that contains the new Duke Power Company office and the new city hall has limited development and it is assumed by the preliminary plan that these new facilities will provide enough parking for their employees and the visitors that will be transacting business there.

However, it should be kept in mind that if development does take place in the area, more off-street parking will be needed and it may well be a good idea for the City to take options or purchase additional land in the block to have for these future needs.

BLOCK 8

The new supermarket and car wash have provided ample parking for their needs at the present time and it will not be necessary to expand these unless other businesses begin to use the same lot area. The major need in this case is not for more spaces, but for a better developed parking area. Large areas such as the supermarket parking lot need desperately to be softened visually. The large areas of asphalt add no beauty but could easily be transformed by planting several dozen trees into an area that would be admired by workers, shoppers and citizens alike.





PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Display Courts - Fountain Courts

The walking customer has to a large part been one of the primary considerations in developing a unified plan for the downtown area of Graham.

If the downtown is going to strive to develop an identity of its own that will be synonymous with the name of Graham, the walking customer must be given prime importance. As seen on the preliminary plan the entire downtown area has been connected and interlaced with pedestrian walkways, display areas, sitting spaces, and areas that are landscaped to provide contrast to the buildings and the paved surfaces. The pedestrian has been given his own area where vehicles are forbidden, an area where man and machine do not constantly conflict with each other.

This area has been provided by the rearrangement of several aspects of the downtown area. FIRST, on Main Street the number of parking spaces have been reduced. The parking spaces were removed to provide larger areas along the sidewalk for benches, planters, customer information signs, sculpture, and fountains and the many other items of street furniture that will contribute to the enjoyment of the customer's visit to the downtown area.

SECOND, the width of the roadway has been narrowed. This has been done to eliminate the center street parking and unloading of trucks and delivery vans, but the primary reasons being to create crossing areas for the walking customers at the corners and at the mid points of the blocks.

THIRD, the areas in the northwest and southeast corners of the square around the court house have been used to create display areas. These display areas or courts should be used regularly to display any item that will create interest in the downtown area. These displays would include boats, camping equipment (see sketch), new or old cars, farm equipment, or local industrial products. Also a variety of different activities could take place in these areas. School groups could have pep rallies before athletic events, choral groups could sing on holidays, street dances could be held during the summer, politicians could make speeches and outdoor art shows could be displayed in the courts. The variety is limited only by the imagination.

FOURTH, the opposite sides or the northeast and southwest corners of the square are to be used as fountain courts. These would serve primarily as focal points and areas of pedestrian circulation. The fountains would be surrounded with planters, trees and benches for the customers to enjoy and use during their shopping trip.

FIFTH, if the development of the off-street parking proceeds as is contemplated the need for connecting walkways will become increasingly important. Therefore, it is proposed that the two alleys presently opening on Main Street should be developed into pedestrian access routes which the walking customer could use to get to the main shopping areas easily. Also the alley next to the billiard parlor that opens to the court house square could be improved and developed into a valuable connection to rear parking. Improvements to any such walkway should consist of a minimum of adequate lighting, paved walkways, appropriate landscaping and a general cleaning up of the rear entrance of the buildings to be passed.

IMPLEMENTATION

To develop a plan on paper is very important for without it there can be no unified objectives, no common direction and there can be no orderly growth for the downtown. But the work is only as effective as the deed and if the paper plan cannot be used to develop a real and working system then it has only been a mental exercise for the planner and planning commission. Graham can ill afford to put this study on the shelf and forget about it. The needs of the downtown are too obvious and time will only make the situation worse. The preliminary plan will not and cannot be completely implemented in its proposed form and will, as time passes have to be modified because of unexpected developments. Therefore the plan must not be looked upon as an inflexible blueprint to be built to the exact letter of the study. If this were the case the first instance of deviation from the proposed plan would render it void. The plan is a flexible instrument that is presenting guidelines and objectives for the future development and growth of the downtown shopping area.

General Organization

The actual construction of the on-street proposed improvements in the downtown area will have to be initiated by the City in order to close or narrow any streets or change the traffic flow. These elements are the legal responsibility of the municipality and will have to be accomplished in a manner prescribed by law. The other improvements such as widening the sidewalks, placing benches, planting trees and shrubs and flowers, erecting general information signs and creating display areas, fountain courts, alley access ways will have to be by some form of city-merchant coordination in finance. The City should make arrangements to maintain all improvements made in the street area in order to be insured of uniform maintenance.

All these improvements will require a majority of support on the part of the downtown merchants and for that reason it will be necessary to form a Downtown Merchants Organization. This organization should be charged with the responsibility of promoting and fostering the orderly growth of the core area. The limits of the organization will have to be as broad and as involved as the downtown itself. Committees for unified advertising, parking, street beautification, attracting new businesses, encouraging renovation of older structures, financing for any and all of the necessary projects, and in general promoting the downtown of Graham as a Full Facility Shopping Area will have to be appointed from the interested and responsible people in the downtown area.

Year to year activity and accomplishments will have to be programmed in order that completed projects and projects under construction can be pointed to as signs of movement in the downtown. Each of the above committees will have to set goals and objectives for accomplishment on a yearly basis to insure as much continued activity as possible. If this development is to be a twenty year plan, which it may well be, then each of these committees should have at least twenty staged projects to be completed. Continued activity is the best source of encouragement for both the committee member and the merchant.

Professionals

A final consideration in the general development of the downtown is that in order to get quality results for the effort and money that is being spent, professionals or specialists in the relative fields should be consulted. Landscape architects should be used to organize and design all outdoor spaces such as pedestrian walking areas, the display areas, the fountain courts, the parking lots and any of the rear entrance walking spaces. Architects will provide a much better solution for new construction or renovations than a biased salesman trying to promote his particular product. Whether it is a new building, a refronting, or the re-vamping of the interior an architect should be able to produce a better solution for the same amount of money. It may well be that one architectural firm could be commissioned to do sketches for many of the stores that are contemplating remodeling. The City at present uses the facilities of an engineer for all of its utility and street projects and this should be continued in order to maintain a high level of public service.

Traffic Circulation

The development of the downtown traffic circulation plan will depend to a great extent on the list of priorities that the City sets for the State Highway Department. Any steps taken to complete the Thoroughfare Plan will have to be a joint effort between the Highway Department and the City. The City cannot expect the State to do all of the work and therefore, must meet them at least half way in purchases of rights-of-way and other costs it must share. Also the south ends of Maple and Marshall streets will have to be joined at the Interstate to complete the plan.

Parking

The most logical means of solving the parking problems in downtown Craham today will necessitate a cooperative effort on the part of the City and the merchants. This cooperative effort can best be directed and operated in the form of a Parking Authority. A Parking Authority should be legally established and a board appointed to direct its efforts. The authority would have to be funded either by the City or the merchants in the be-

ginning to acquire its first lot. Meters could be installed and provide a source of revenue for future purchases and improvements. If the lots were purchased with borrowed money it will be necessary for the merchants to underwrite the monthly payments until the lot could support itself. The major advantage of the Parking Authority is that there would be one group of individuals solely responsible for establishing off-street parking. This group should be composed of members of the community who have a direct interest in the development of the downtown area and will be willing to work to accomplish its over-all needs.

Other means of supplying parking may consist of private development on a business basis, although this system would be marginal in a City the size of Graham.

Long term lease agreements are usually easier to negotiate than a straight forward purchase, but the lease must be sufficiently long enough to pay for the needed improvements and provide some significant improvements in the parking problem. The priorities of construction should be concentrated in the development of larger lots in Blocks one, two, five and six. It is felt that lots located in these areas would serve more merchants at present than in other areas.

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